

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 VIENTI 00709 301333Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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R 301042Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2347

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0709

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, CASC, LA

SUBJ: DEAN/SHARMAN CASE

1. I DELIVERED THE SECRETARY'S LETTER ON THE DEAN CASE TO FONMIN PHOUMI VONGVICHIT TODAY. AT THE SAME TIME I GAVE HIM A LETTER FROM ME (VIENTIANE 702) DESCRIBING THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF DEAN AND SHARMAN'S ARREST AS REPORTED TO US BY A PERSON WHO WAS ON THE BOAT (THE BOAT CAPTAIN) -- PROTECT SOURCE. I ALSO INFORMED PHOUMI THAT UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES WE CONSIDERED THE PROPOSED VISIT OF DEFENSE MINISTER SISOUK NA CHAMPASSAK TO WASHINGTON, ACCOMPANIED BY A MINISTER FROM THE PATHET LAO SIDE, TO BE INOPPORTUNE. PHOUMI AGREED.

2. PHOUMI SAID THAT HE HAD NOT YET RECEIVED A REPLY FROM SAM NEUA BUT ASSUMED THAT AN INVESTIGATOR HAD BEEN SENT TO THE AREA. HE WOULD FORWARD THE LETTERS I HAD GIVEN HIM TO PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG AND TO SAM NEUA. PHOUMI SAID HE HOPED THAT THE DEAN AFFAIR WOULD NOT BE HANDLED IN A MANNER WHICH WOULD AFFECT RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR GOVERNMENTS. THESE HAD IMPROVED STEADILY. HE SAID HE DID NOT WANT THE COMRADES IN SAM NEUA TO MISUNDERSTAND THE SITUATION AND PUT HIM IN A DIFFICULT POSITION. (COMMENT: THE INFERENCE WAS THAT PHOUMI WAS OVERCOMING RESISTANCE IN SAM NEUA TO IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND THAT IF

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 VIENTI 00709 301333Z

OUR PRESSURE BECAME TOO GREAT IT MIGHT BACKFIRE.)

I REPLIED THAT WE HAD DONE OUR UTMOST TO HANDLE THE DEAN AFFAIR CALMLY AND TACTFULLY, BUT THE BOYS HAD BEEN MISSING FOR FIVE MONTHS AND WE FOUND THE EVIDENCE THAT THEY WERE IN PATHET LAO HANDS VERY COMPELLING. FOR EXAMPLE, THE LETTER I HAD JUST GIVEN HIM WAS AN EYE WITNESS ACCOUNT OF THEIR ARREST BY PATHET LAO SOLDIERS.

3. PHOUMI SAID HE HOPED TO HAVE NEWS SOON AND AGREED TO RECEIVE MRS. DEAN NEXT WEEK. I TOLD HIM I WOULD TAKE HER TO LUANG PRABANG TO MEET THE PRIME MINISTER ON FEBRUARY 4.
WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DETENTION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975VIENTI00709
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750034-0608
From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975015/aaaaadxi.tel
Line Count: 73
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 JUL 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <12 NOV 2003 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

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Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEAN/SHARMAN CASE
TAGS: MOPS, CASC, LA, AS, US, (DEAN, CHARLES M), (SHARMAN, NEIL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006